SEQL:
Pushing the Integrated Planning Envelope

Presentation to the
North Carolina Board of Transportation
Environmental Planning/Policy Committee

July 12, 2006

Quick SEQL History

❑ **2001 to 2006**

❑ **Begun by Charlotte and Mecklenburg County; managed by Centralina and Catawba Regional COGs**

❑ **Spread from 26 to over 80 jurisdictions and other stakeholder groups**

❑ **Significant EPA funding**

❑ **Progression:**

   ❑ From no discussion to toolkit (menu) of actions

   ❑ From action implementation in a vacuum to action implementation that paid multiple benefits

   ❑ From implementation to changes in decision-making processes

The SEQL Region
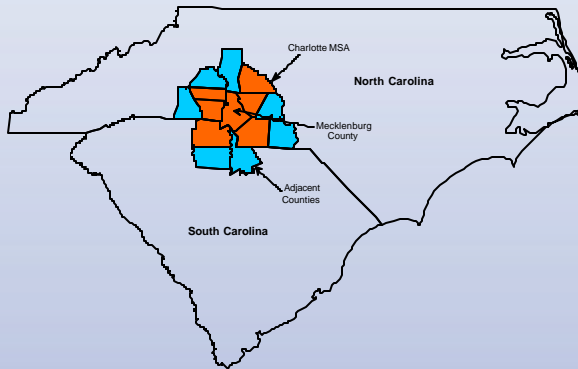
SEQL Goals

- **Implement regionally-endorsed environmental initiatives**

- **Engage in ongoing regional Integrated Environmental Planning and action**

- **Institutionalize environmental considerations in local and regional decision-making**

SEQL Implementation Goal Successes

❑ **84 jurisdictions have self-reported implementation of 732 actions in four areas:**

- Air quality
- Water quality
- Sustainable growth
- Additional environmental measures

❑**Estimated decrease in about 62 tons of emissions annually from certain SEQL AQ actions**

The Integration Goal

❑ **Defined by our elected officials as dealing with:**

- Cross-sectoral issues and impacts

- Cross-jurisdictional issues and impacts

- "Not just the usual suspects" but broader stakeholder groups

❑ **Why?**

- Too easy to work at cross-purposes

- Because it really does take more than one reason to get things done…in a sustainable way!

Key Integration Tools

- ❑ **The Visioning Process**
- ❑ **Asking LIFESTYLE questions**
- ❑ **The Land Use/Comprehensive Planning Process and NCGS 160A-383 and NCGS 153A-341**
- ❑ **The "Web of Integration" Concept**
- ❑ **Stakeholder Processes of ALL types, including "not just the usual suspects"**
- ❑ **Integrated Planning Roundtables**
- ❑ **Data**
- ❑ **Talking to colleagues and non-colleagues**

SEQL | SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT for QUALITY of LIFE
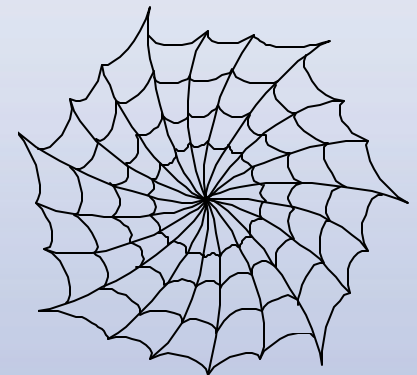
Why Land Use is Critical

❑ **The way we develop our land impacts:**

- How much we drive and whether we can walk, bike or use transit...

- The quality of our air...

- The quality of our water...

- Whether we are "fed" by the places we live

- Costs for providing services...

- Our long-term economic viability...

- And a whole range of social justice issues...

SEQL Integration Successes

- **Cleveland County:** The best way to preserve rural character is to make our cities and towns vibrant places

- **Mecklenburg County:** How to avoid the "good for water/bad for air" argument on density

- **Mooresville/Charlotte/Others:** Planning for walkability, transit, and mixed use also promotes senior citizens' independent living

- **Gaston, Iredell, Union:** "integrated planning roundtables"

- **Lincoln County:** Integrating environment with land use and transportation planning on the front end
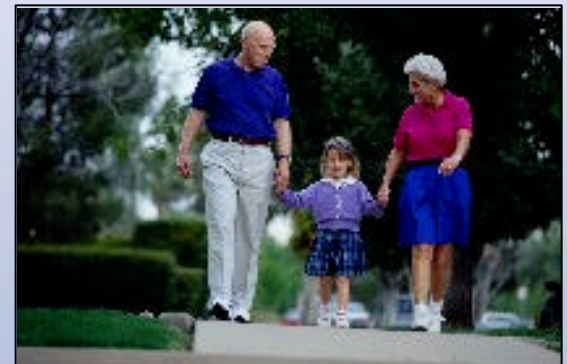
The "Institutionalization" Goal

❑ **Means making environmental considerations and integrated planning part of "the way we do business"**

❑ **Why?**

- More likely to actually be done
- Creates a new organizational paradigm
- Outlives shorter-term changes in boards or staff
- Educates and "trains" the community in a way of interacting
- Is appreciated by the public because it makes sense!

    They think we're doing it already and a lot of their frustration is due to the fact that we're not!

Institutionalization Progress

❑ **Adoption of environmental and integrated planning considerations into local policy documents, procedures, and regional principles**

- Anti-idling policies by school systems and municipal/county fleets
- "General Development Policies"
- Inclusion of environment in land use plans, small area plans, and site review processes (that are mandated to be inclusive)
- Visioning

❑ **Adoption of specific tools into ordinances for land use regulation**

- Connectivity and access management provisions in and for subdivisions
- Sidewalks
- Tree planting or preservation
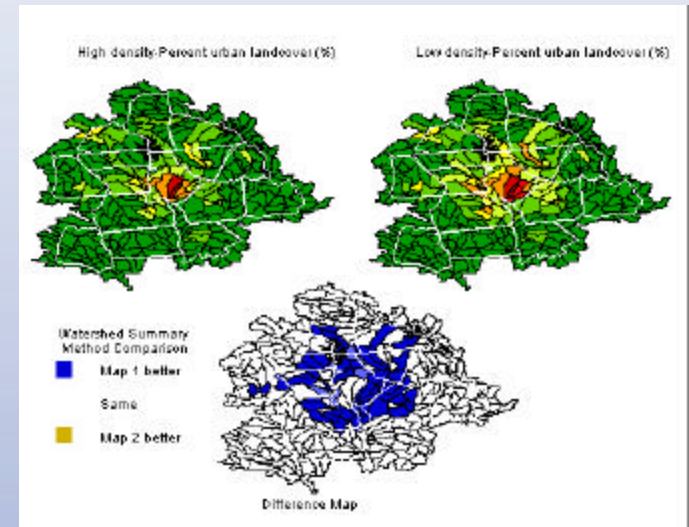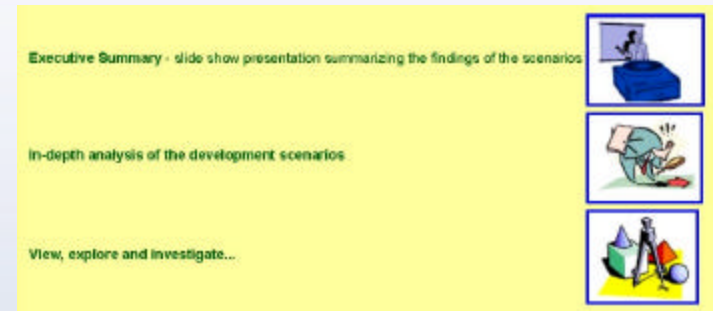- Including transportation goals in land use plans

ReVA and Scenario Planning

❑ **Allows comparison of multiple environmental indicators across a large geography**
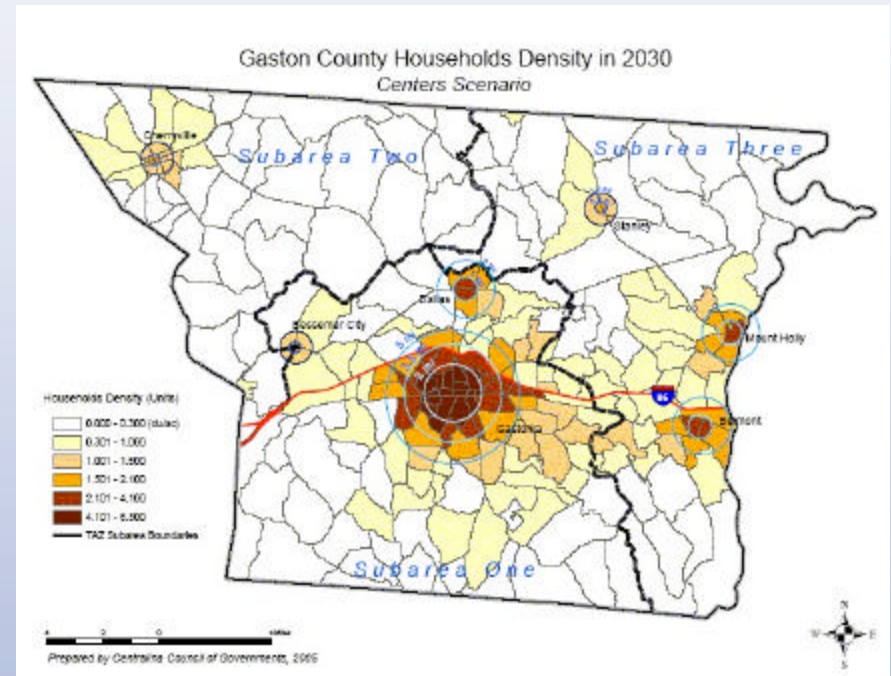
- Air
- Terrestrial
- Water

❑ **Challenges:**

- Data intensive
- Formulating assumptions
- The issue of dueling models
- How to explain the results

Executive Summary - slide show presentation summarizing the findings of the scenarios

In-depth analysis of the development scenarios

View, explore and investigate...

High density-Percent urban landcover (%)   Low density-Percent urban landcover (%)

Watershed Summary
Method Comparison
- Map 1 better
- Same
- Map 2 better

Difference Map

Redistributing Population to Test Smart Growth

Gaston County Households Density in 2030
Regional Traffic Demand Model Projection

Gaston County Households Density in 2030
Centers Scenario
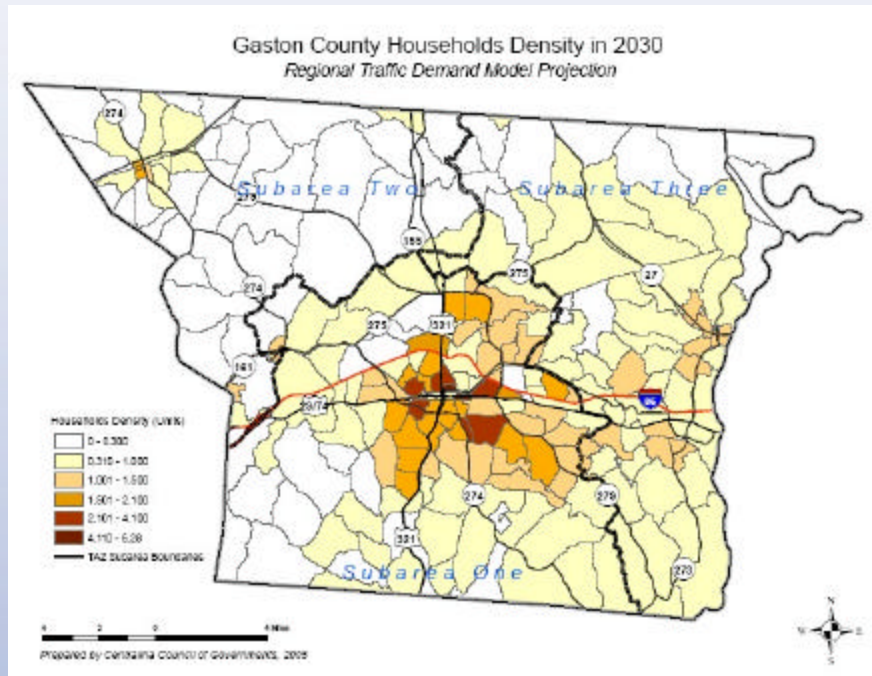
Lessons Learned from the Implementation Phase

❑ **A menu of options is important**

❑ **Having early and late adopters is to be expected**

❑ **People forget the good things they do—you have to keep reminding them!**

❑ **It is much easier to get local elected officials to do things for MORE THAN ONE REASON**

Lessons Learned from the Integration Phase

❑ **Everyone "gets it" but most haven't thought about it**

- Hire the best facilitator you can afford

- It DOES require a change from a competitive to collaborative mindset

- Focus on "interest" rather than "position"

❑ **IP creates new and unexpected partners**

- ...and provides "political cover" to elected officials

❑ **Policy makers DO listen to professional/technical staff—**

- So staff has to "get it" too and work together

- "How we've always done it" and time are obstacles

❑ **Funding programs, priorities, and regulations still often work toward "silo'd" approaches**

❑ **Large or small jurisdictions can do this!**

Institutionalization Lessons AND Challenges

❑ **Greatest promise: combination of integrated land use/transportation/environment planning based on a sound and well-documented community vision**

- How do the residents want to LIVE?—and how much will they GROW?
- What do they treasure?
- What are "fatal flaws" that would impact development planning?
- Modeling the impacts of alternative futures both for data and visualization

❑ **Greatest challenge, "What do you do with this information once you've got it?"**

- How do you balance open space preservation and protection of key areas with individual property rights?
- How do you ensure economic equity to the maximum extent possible?
- How do you do it fast enough in fast-growing areas?
- How do you balance the State's need for consistency and accountability with the local need for flexibility and ownership?

What We Still Need to be Successful:

❑ **Better tools**

- TDRs
- Stronger requirements for comprehensive planning and consistency reviews
- Integration of models and more widespread model use
  - Land use/transportation integration
  - Visualization
  - Development alternatives analysis tools and funding to use the ones that exist
- More research on integrated impacts—where are tipping points?

❑ **Better data**

- Consistent GIS data consistent across large areas AND at a fairly fine scale
- Data to support the use of development alternative analysis tools
- Common standards for land use classification for tax purposes to create a parcel-based data set

What We Still Need to be Successful:

❑ **Stronger public involvement**

- Public and elected/appointed official education on an ongoing basis
- Much more emphasis on public involvement in our planning processes

❑ **Staff support and better staff collaboration**

- Project "maintenance" staff can be minimal
- We work by leveraging and "converting" other staff to SEQL principles
- State staff flexibility in receiving new ideas and approaches
- Ways to integrate State needs with local needs so that both are addressed **with local ownership**
- Willingness to engage in "interest" discussions to solve problems

❑ **Ways to satisfactorily document local commitments and ensure follow-through**

Opportunities for Collaboration with NCDOT:

- **The new CTP Process**
- **The Integration Working Group**
- **Collaborating on Visioning parameters that can support transportation and land use goals regionally—and considering scalar issues**
- **Dealing with multi-jurisdictional issues and corridor planning**
- **Volunteering as a guinea pig for tests of integration related to environmental/planning issues**

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